

Guerilla Potter

A/N: Smarter Voldemort launches his conquest of Britain immediately after his resurrection. Smarter Harry, Sirius, and co. are the only ones who can stop him. Unconventional tactics.

Canon Voldemort wasted a lot of time in nearly every book. Here's my exploration of a smarter, more impatient Voldemort. He gets things started right off. Begins after Harry's 4th year at Hogwarts.

This is a Harry who becomes quite ruthless...you are warned.

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

Harry Potter sighed. He didn't want to go 'home' to the Dursley residence this summer. He had a perfectly good godfather (who was falsely considered a Dark Wizard and mass murderer); he had perfectly good friends. He could find half a dozen different families willing to let him stay over for the summer. Going back to Little Whinging made no sense.

Little about the wizarding world made sense.

In this world, evil wizards didn't stay dead. Heroic people like Cedric Diggory died for no reason. The 'safest' wizarding school in Britain had played host to a cruel Death Eater who didn't teach potions well, a disguised Death Eater sent to capture Harry, a deluded wizard who played host to a parasitic Dark Lord, a foppish fraud skilled only in Memory Charms, a Board Governor who attempted to have a student killed to resurrect the Dark Lord, a massive basilisk,...and the list went on. Vile reporters could write whatever lies they wanted without consequence, such as the current rumor that Harry himself had caused Cedric Diggory's death.

School bureaucrats controlled Harry Potter's life. That was definitely not normal at all. Albus Dumbledore was hiding something...something important. The games the man played; his brilliance and stupidity mingling together. The man always spoke in riddles, though, so even if he said something, Harry wasn't likely to understand it.

Hermione poked Harry in the shoulder a few minutes after the Hogwarts Express arrived in London.

“I don’t want to,” Harry said.

“You can’t live in the train over the summer....” That was Hermione being reasonable again.

Harry rolled his eyes and lifted down Hedwig’s cage. He’d rather go see the Dursleys than listen to another lecture. He loved Hermione most of the time, but she really wasn’t very personable some times, was she?

He stepped down onto the platform and was immediately assaulted by a massive black dog. A familiar massive black dog – his godfather, Sirius Black, hiding out in his animagus form.

“Snuffles!”

Harry let the dog push him over to a corner of the station. Harry knew his mischievous godfather had something planned. Let the Dursleys stew for a while.

But the dog had a different plan. He tilted his head and Harry saw a piece of parchment tied to his godfather’s neck.

“Brilliant! Let me see...” Harry quickly devoured the contents of the letter. Evidently, Sirius had decided that Harry should live with his godfather, Dumbledore be damned.

“So, you’re sneaking me out before the Dursleys even catch sight of me. Inspired, Snuffles....”

The dog gave a throaty ‘woof’ and then led his young charge out a side door from the platform, one that Aurors and other Ministry workers used to quickly move between the platform and an approved apparition point.

After stepping through, the dog surveyed the room, discovered it empty, and transformed. "It's good to see you again, Harry."

Harry hugged the man in response. "I like your plan so far. But I can't leave yet. I need my trunk...."

"Remus will get it."

"Professor Lupin is helping?"

Sirius nodded. "He's helped me to set up the protections on the house we'll be staying in...."

Sirius grabbed Harry and apparated. The form of magical transportation made Harry feel like he'd just been pinned to a wall by a large chunk of iron.

"I hate that...."

"Welcome to the House of Black...."

"FILTH. I HEAR YOU, HALFBLOODS AND BLOOD TRAITORS, I SMELL YOU..."

Harry felt shock for a second, then a touch of post-Apparition nausea hit him, then he laughed.

"Nothing's ever dull around you, is it," Harry said.

"I hope not." Sirius gestured around the dim, bleak entry room. "This is where I grew up. Hadn't been back in a long, long time. Bad memories. We'll clean it up this summer, of course."

"I don't mind doing chores...."

Sirius got a dark look on his face. "Chores, huh? Dumbledore had the gall to tell me you had to stay with those blasted Muggles...and then he asked permission to use this old pile of sticks to mount a resistance to Voldemort. I said my price was that my godson be

allowed to stay here. Dumbledore refused, of course, the addled bastard, so now you're here and he's not...."

Harry laughed. "It's going to be an...interesting summer."

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

Voldemort had planned and plotted most every moment he'd been without his body. His scheme to use the Philosopher's Stone to regain a body had been his seventh attempt. The ritual using blood, bone, and flesh was the tenth effort and the first success. Dark Magic offered many winding pathways to achieve the things one wanted; all of them came at a cost and took time and had a high possibility of failure.

So much time.

He hadn't just planned for a new body – he'd planned out the first bold strokes of his new campaign. Lucius wanted him to wait, to let the Ministry and the Light side tear each other apart. Voldemort himself wanted to know what that blasted Prophecy said – especially after that light show with Potter in the graveyard – and he wanted Dumbledore out of the picture.

But he realized he didn't need to wait. He could just use better plans.

"Gibbon and Avery, step forward."

The two nervous men did just that. "You will take three thousand galleons from your vaults and purchase blank runic tablets in Eastern Europe. Don't buy them here – or in France. I will know if you do. Ensure their quality. They are most important to our plans for Hogwarts."

He waved his hand as a banishment.

"Master, do we need to purchase ground bone or blood or soot or ...?" Gibbon had trained as a cursebreaker years back. He still possessed a good mind.

“I will provide the marking material. It was a good question, though. All of you must ask me if you are unsure how to fully complete your missions....”

The pair left the room. Both recognized the simplicity of their task and were grateful.

“MacNair, Yaxley, and Selwynn.... Step forward.”

The three lowered their hoods when they kneeled before their Lord. “We are long past subtlety and games in dealing with these fools. I will have my Death Eaters reunited – and then we will raze Azkaban for the insult shown to my followers. You three will plan it. MacNair, be especially circumspect in gathering the warding diagrams for the place. Selwynn, you will place the Imperius Curse on at least three of the Aurors stationed out there. More if you can as we lack sufficient strength to do this completely on our own, given the other plans we’re running. Yaxley, you will remain behind so that I can brief you on how to begin negotiations with the Dementors. Questions?”

Seeing nothing, Voldemort waved MacNair and Selwynn away. Yaxley went and stood against the far wall.

“Nott, come here. You will contact our old supporter, Ms. Edgecombe. We will have need of a broken Floo Network in a few weeks. You must also get your Imperius Curse skills back in order. You are perfectly positioned with your seat on the Wizengamot to do this task. I will summon you in three days to discuss your progress. Do not disappoint me...as you are critical for our plans inside the Ministry.”

The tall, thin man bowed without uttering a sound and left the chamber. Three days to become newly proficient in the Imperius Curse wasn’t a lot of time...but he wouldn’t fail.

“Malfoy, my slithery friend, I have need of your connections. Come here.”

The tall blonde man removed his hood as he knelt.

“You have two tasks to accomplish. Both of them are inside Hogwarts. Select appropriate proxies. First, you are to fail to kill Severus Snape. Do you understand?”

“You suspect him of betrayal?”

The Dark Lord tapped his fingers against his throne. “I said nothing about my motivations. I only told you about the results I want. Severus must neither die nor fail to be attacked. Do you understand?”

“Yes, my Lord.”

“Your second task is the more important.” The Dark Lord spent several minutes explaining the requirements of the mission. “No harm, no damage. I would suggest attacking Severus and taking care of the more important matter at the same time. In four days time, I want both parts complete.”

Malfoy bowed and turned to leave.

“Yaxley, come back over here. You’ve never read any Muggle history, have you?”

“Of course not, my Lord.”

“They are vile...but they do know their large scale warfare. Isolate our opponents; destroy them one by one; stealth attacks and overwhelming power to cow them. I was stupid in how I planned our first insurrection. This time around, things will be different.”

“Yes, my Lord. How do you wish me to treat with the Dementors?”

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

June 28 was a day that Harry would not forget. He stumbled down into the kitchen of Number 12 Grimmauld Place to discover the Daily Prophet scattered over the table.

“Harry....” Sirius had obviously broken open a bottle of Firewhiskey as his words were slurred.

The young man picked up the paper from the table and tried to reconstruct the stories it told.

“Azkaban Prison Explodes; Fate of Prisoners Unknown; Dementors Roaming Free on Mainland.”

Harry wondered if this story had driven Sirius to the bottle. His old prison cell was gone. The Death Eaters it once housed were now likely back with their master.

“Cornelius Fudge Suffers Heart Attack and Dies.”

Harry was surprised...and he wasn't. Such a weak willed wizard couldn't stand up to any kind of strain, could he?

Harry continued digging inside the paper. There were more acts of chaos listed on every page. “Severus Snape Poisoned Self at Hogwarts.” “Divination Professor Kidnapped – or Off on a Drunken Binge?”

Ah.... Harry realized what was happening. This was proof that the Daily Prophet was no longer trustworthy, if it ever had been. Azkaban may have been destroyed, but it was definitely raided first. Fudge was probably dead, but it wasn't a heart attack, was it? Trelawney – his third most useless teacher at Hogwarts – had been kidnapped and Snape...well, someone had tried to kill the man.

Sirius raised his head off the table. “The war never ended, you see. It's just like the worst days of the original war with Voldemort.”

“Getting drunk and drooling on the table won't solve anything....”

“Seemed like a good way to start, kiddo.”

“We need.... We need people, Sirius. People who won't freak out about you being here. And we'll need a plan.”

“You're the brigadier all of a sudden?”

Harry shook his head. "I don't want anyone else to die, Sirius."

"Voldemort started a war, Harry. He's going to kill people."

Harry just shuddered and thought of a lifeless Cedric. "How do you fight an insane man who doesn't care how many on his own side die?"

"I don't know," Sirius said. "We'll have to...."

"We fight them in ways they won't expect, Sirius." Then Harry mumbled, "Hell, no one's ever taught me to duel...."

A mostly drunk Sirius sat up and blinked. "That's right. The unexpected attack...."

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

Voldemort threw the dead woman to the floor of his meeting chamber. He'd just ripped through the old fraud's mind for a final time and discovered the prophecy that had cost him his body so many years ago. He had her blood already and no longer needed anything from her.

It had been impetuous and stupid to attempt to act on a half-known prophecy all those years ago. The damned thing had been self-fulfilling. Voldemort knew he'd been stupid. He should have just captured Trelawney then and been done with it.

Instead of an Avada Kedvra on the infant Potter, he should have suffocated the blasted child with a pillow. It was a mistake, a costly mistake. One he wouldn't repeat.

"Lucius!"

The blond man appeared and bowed. "Have someone dispose of that," he said, pointing toward the dead Divination Professor's body.

"Should it be discovered?"

Voldemort shook his head.

“What news of our new Ministry?”

“Amelia Bones evaded the team sent to apply the Imperius Curse. She’ll be reported as under suspicion of poisoning Fudge.... We’ll have to fall back on Rufus Scrimgeour to become Minister.”

Voldemort nodded. “Who cast the Curse?”

“Mulciber.”

“Fine. What is the new slate?”

Lucius pulled a short bit of parchment from his robes. “Scrimgeour will be Minister; Dolores Umbridge will head the MLE....”

“Is she under the Curse?”

“No need, my Lord.” Dolores was more rabid on the topic of halfbreeds than many of the marked Death Eaters.

“See that it stays that way. Results only matter. If she’s useless, then she’s dead.”

Lucius nodded absently. He hoped Umbridge ran afoul of his Master as the toad had demanded bribes almost exceeding those paid to the fool Fudge. “Wigberta Edgecombe will be the Senior Undersecretary; Galactacus Flint will be named Ambassador at Large....”

“See that he keeps the other wizarding nations out of our affairs. The man’s been on the Wizengamot for decades, but I hope he learns the better stalling tactics of diplomacy quickly. See to it, Lucius.”

The rest of the list met with vague approval. Lucius Malfoy knew that Voldemort would hold him responsible for the success of the slate.

“Let’s discuss Harry Potter....”

Lucius nodded. "We've already adjusted the Trace monitors to search for him, my Lord."

"And the Taboo?"

"In place since yesterday. None of the unworthy criminals will be able to speak your name without one of our teams descending on them."

"You handle the details well, Lucius. Let's be sure that it continues."

"The Goblins, my Lord, are demanding explanations about Fudge's death."

"The Goblins will soon have other things to worry about. Wizards should handle our monetary system, not those untrustworthy beasts. We must take care of other matters before we deal with the goblins.... When doesn't matter as we'll kill them all in the end."

"Yes, my Lord."

Lucius made to get up from his kneeling.

"One more thing, Lucius. Bring me Horace Slughorn's head. Today."

This time around, Voldemort wasn't leaving anything to chance or the whimsy of prophecy. Liabilities like Slughorn would be dealt with. The man was one of the very few who knew about the horcruxes Tom had created. The old teacher was unreliable to an extreme.

Slughorn dead, yes, it was a start. Perhaps he'd even go and rehide his horcruxes. Perhaps.

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

It was definitely a strange place to have a meeting. Harry, Sirius, and three dozen other people stood inside the Forbidden Forest, right at the ward line surrounding Hogwarts.

"If anyone wants out of this war – if you trust in Hogwarts to keep you safe – just step over the ward line. Anything can go in, for now, but

nothing of the Light can come out,” Sirius said to the people on the open side of the ward line. A few terrified witches and wizards did just that, some of them with children, some of them alone. All of them had shrunken bags; few of them seemed to carry in their own food. Sirius knew he would never willingly walk into a situation where he might be unable to feed himself.

Dumbledore gestured to some of his people. The refugees left the forest. Dumbledore and McGonagall remained behind.

There were very few people remaining on the free side of the ward line.

“Do you know what it is, Headmaster?” Harry asked.

“It seems like a perversion of a Light ward, meant to allow only those of the Light to pass inside a place. This seems inverted so that it only keeps the Light influenced from getting out....”

“So Snape can leave?”

Dumbledore shot a dirty look at Sirius. “As a matter of fact, Severus is able to leave the wards.”

Sirius laughed for a bitter moment. “That should prove his true disposition....”

Harry held up his hand. “This isn’t helping. Snape is a dark bastard, no one....”

Professor McGonagall blanched at that. “Mr. Potter....”

“No one disputes that, but the problems outside here are pretty bad. Hermione’s home was trashed and I don’t know what happened to her family, but she’s safe. We need the Hogwarts Register to locate all the other Muggleborn....”

McGonagall looked stricken over what Harry had just said, but Dumbledore pulled the thick tome from his robes. “I suspected it might be needed.”

He threw it across the wards. A witch stepped forward and snatched it from the air. Her cloak's hood shifted. Amelia Bones smiled and nodded. "Thank you. I can't do my legal job, not as someone 'suspected of murder,' but I can still do what I'm supposed to do...."

Remus Lupin stepped out of the shadows. "Have you barricaded the fireplaces yet?"

Dumbledore nodded. "I decided it was a necessary precaution."

"We tested them to communicate with each other at some abandoned stores in Diagon Alley. 'Aurors' were on the scene within thirty seconds...."

"Then the Ministry has truly fallen," Dumbledore said. "We've got sufficient amounts of food and water here. Anyone who is unable to escape should be sent here."

"They won't be able to get out. Can Hogwarts stand against the combined forces of the Ministry and the Death Eaters?" Sirius sounded doubtful.

"We have to," Dumbledore said, sounding entirely confident. Harry decided then that the old man had gone senile. He had no idea how to get out of Hogwarts nor had he any knowledge of how strong his opposition would be. Yet he was confident.

Stupid. A surefire way to die. Like a man being confident in an old spell to protect James and Lily Potter – or a series of magical challenges to protect a Philosopher's Stone. The man had lost his relationship with reality.

"Sirius, use reasonable means to free us from their tyranny...."

"Reasonable?"

"Do not let yourself be tempted...."

Harry interrupted the argument. "Headmaster, whenever you choose to destroy the wards holding you in, you come join in. I'll fall in behind whatever plan you might have."

"Alas, young Harry, I cannot. Destroying Tom's ward line would likely destroy the most powerful of Hogwarts' own defenses. I prefer being contained to being completely defenseless. However, I would be most grateful if we could protect you here at Hogwarts, Harry...."

"Sorry. The Dark Tosser can break his new wards whenever he wants, I'd expect. I don't consider this place particularly safe after Voldemort was able to enter in my first year here. In any case, I prefer to try to do something." McGonagall looked furious at the situation. She obviously wanted to be out doing something, too. Dumbledore looked rather pleased, though, at how things turned out.

"Do not forget, our choices prove who we are. Stay with the Light and Just. It has served us all well for centuries...."

Harry decided the man was either twisted or truly on the path to dementia. He didn't realize the danger he was in – or didn't care. His high minded ideals would get a lot of people killed.

Harry turned the information over and over in his mind until Sirius tapped his shoulder and pulled him in for an apparition.

The free team returned back to their informal headquarters on Grimmauld Place. The afternoon light turned to darkness long before the assembled people agreed on what they needed to do.

Amelia Bones stood up at the end of the meeting. "Remus, Tonks, Celestina, and Andrew, we need to start collecting the Muggleborns tonight. Mr. Patil, can you loan us a few of your magic carpets for the trip over the Channel? It'll be easier than brooms."

The Indian wizard just nodded. He hadn't taken long to consent to assist in this particular mission. His wife and daughters were already in France.

The other dozen people in the house broke up their meeting into smaller groups. Some needed to eat. Others wanted to reargue portions of the meeting. Harry and Sirius watched Amelia and her group leave to begin the Freedom Flights. It was the compassionate arm of their plan.

The more vicious part was what they were all still arguing over.

Harry cocked his head to listen to a bit of the chatter. "We're overwhelmed numerically, the people are cowering, former magical allies turn a blind eye.... What can we do?"

Sirius growled. "I'm sending Podmore off with one of the Freedom Flights. He's an old woman."

Harry nodded. "Like I said before, we'll have to turn their Ministerial advantages against them..."

The conversation whirled around them. "Of course it's true. The 'new and improved' Death Eater Prophet would never report it, either. All the Muggleborn inside the Ministry have disappeared...Cresswell, Lyle Majors, that witch in Games and Sports, plus four Light-side purebloods on the Wizengamot. They don't have Azkaban any more, so they're probably just throwing people into ditches...."

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

A prepubescent voice came through the Wizarding Wireless that Amycus Carrow had pushed into the room.

"...wards will offer sanctuary to anyone fleeing the fallen Ministry. Do not send owls or attempt to use the Floo; they're not secure or safe any longer. Cross the wards and you're safe. However, for now, it is impossible to leave once you've entered. Now we have a list of those who are trying to find loved ones. Molly wants to tell William that she is safe and that he should find a safe place. Rigoberto informs Pilar that he is safely in Peru...."

Voldemort waved his hand at the set. "It's amusing. Let them try to have a resistance. It won't last long."

"My Lord," Yaxley said, "Dolores Umbridge wished to speak with you...."

A sour look erupted on the Dark Lord's face. "Is it at all interesting? Her face is so vile that it makes my stomach churn."

Yaxley did not even think of a retort to that comment. It was quite something for Voldemort to complain that another's face was ugly. "She said it was."

Voldemort nodded and a few moments later the squat woman was in Voldemort's presence.

"My Lord...."

"You have not earned the right to address me that way."

"Sir, I wish to form a new commission to deal with the mudbloods of Britain. I call it the Muggleborn Registration Commission...."

Voldemort flicked his wand at the bureaucrat and said, "Crucio."

The massive woman fell to the ground and began screaming at the top of her lungs. Fifteen seconds later, he withdrew his wand.

"Bureaucrats bore me, you disgusting witch. Take the mudbloods in the night and be done with it.... Leave no trace, leave no one who remembers them. How hard is that? You have a government job because I wanted you to have it, but you seem distracted. Focus on the major goals. Find me Harry Potter. Command the Aurors to put down the resistance."

It took the massive woman a full thirty seconds to be able to lift herself from the floor. She was bleeding from her nose and mouth. It just made Voldemort smile.

She waddled out of the room without looking back. Stupidity was a killing offense in Voldemort's dominion.

“Lucius, tell me more about Hogwarts.”

“My lord,” Malfoy said as he quickly entered the room, “the estimates from the Aurors suggest between a thousand and twelve hundred individuals are sheltering there....”

“Excellent. That’s far more than they can sustain with their resources. Dumbledore has signed his own death warrant.”

Lucius stood before his Lord and waited. The entire plan had gone off without incident. Most of the Ministry privately supported the Dark Lord’s pureblood philosophy...and there really wasn’t any sort of organized resistance. No one important inside Britain protested. The diplomats from other countries just clucked and tutted and left everything in place. Voldemort’s reputation - as he was barely whispered to be behind all these changes, it certainly wasn’t public knowledge - was dire enough to keep others from invading.

“Start work on creating the Ministry School where we can keep a close eye on the students who matter. Clear out the fourth floor of the Ministry. Select appropriate teachers. We’ll make your son Head Boy. Do a good job.”

Lucius bowed and crept from the room. The rewards had already begun. It would be a glorious reign.

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

Harry’s opinion on war tactics changed the more he had learned about what Voldemort was doing in this war.

“They destroyed at least four wizarding homes in Ottery St. Catchpole in the last two weeks. The Lovegood family is dead. Cedric Diggory’s parents lost their son and their home within a month. We have to really hit back. In permanent ways. We have to be unexpected when we attack, but it has to be fatal....”

“I walked away from my family over dark magic, Harry.”

“I’m not trying to drown you in the Cruciatus, Sirius. I’m saying we can’t be satisfied with stunners. We can’t hand these people over to the Aurors because the Aurors are our enemies. We’re fighting a guerilla war here to get the numbers down. We have to permanently reduce their numbers. Everyone else is hiding at Hogwarts, fled overseas, or melted into the Muggle world for the time being. We’ve got to win with what we’ve got....”

“I hate this,” Sirius said, resigned to waging a deadly war.

“I don’t love it either. But they toppled the government using Unforgivables. I don’t have any scruples about killing any of them.” Harry didn’t even know if he could set up deadly traps. But he was going to try.

The door to the kitchen opened and the first of the other team members came inside. Amelia, Remus, Tonks, and quite a few others were still spread over Britain rescuing muggleborns as young as four months of age along with their families. Quite a few Light-sided and neutral pureblood families had already fled Britain by themselves, such as the Longbottoms, the Abbotts, the Patils, and the Greengrass clan.

It was a good twenty minutes before most of the seats in the kitchen were filled.

Sirius stood up, as the impromptu and somewhat unwilling host of this ragtag group, and said, “In short: an ambush. We pick the site, prepare it, and then lace it with some powerful bait....”

“What?” That was Podmore again. The old woman hadn’t gone to France yet.

“It won’t be you, Sturgis,” Sirius said.

Harry held up a sheet of paper. A picture of him from his stint as a TriWizard Champion was there along with text that read, “Harry Potter, Wanted for the Murder of Cedric Diggory.”

“He can’t be the bait,” Paracelsus Tangent said. “He’s a boy.”

"I walk in, send off a Lumos, and walk out," Harry said. "Not too much danger.... The Ministry will use the 'Trace' to find me. But they won't send an owl. Death Eaters – or their suspect Aurors – or someone else will show up."

"What's the trap, then," Podmore asked.

Sirius looked at the man and another set of thoughts ran through his head. 'Danger.' Sirius caught the eyes of Luce Smith-White, a halfblood Sirius had gone to Hogwarts with, and she nodded. Seconds later, she'd sent a silent stunner at Sturgis.

"A very bad spy," Sirius said.

Luce removed the man's right sleeve, nothing. He wasn't a Death Eater, but it was clear he was fishing for information. In this day and age, curiosity killed more than cats.

"I don't trust the Potion Master at Hogwarts," Sirius said, "so we'll have to do something else to get the full story out of him."

Luce levitated the man out of the room, but was gone for only a minute. "I stripped his wand and what looked like a portkey from him. He's sealed in a closet for now...."

Sirius smiled. "That could have been a disaster had Podmore been less obvious."

A thin, tall man in the back of the room raised his hand. "Why don't you utilize some 'operational security,' then. Don't share the details of the plans with anyone who doesn't absolutely need to know."

Sirius nodded again. "Fine, let it be said that we'll be luring some of the Ministry's lackeys into a trap in the very near future."

The meeting continued with additional plans of how to secure supplies or hinder the Ministry or get information outside of Britain. A few newspapers in France were beginning to see through the fogscreen imposed by the Ministry's efforts.

The last question was one Sirius hadn't wanted to address this early.
"Where will we house the prisoners?"

Sirius looked to Harry. "There won't ever be any prisoners, Melinda."

"What?"

"We're not using stunners and conjured ropes. We're not leaving anyone or anything alive."

That comment from Sirius caused most of the room to nod in agreement, while a few like Melinda and Dedalus Diggle seemed shocked.

"But Dumbledore..."

Harry picked up the conversation. "...has a thousand people at Hogwarts and we have less than twenty out here. We can't fight the civilized way with these sorts of numbers."

"Even if we win, we'll be criminals."

"England has terrible weather and a rather strange tradition of injustice," Sirius said, "so I'm not averse to a change of climate."

That particular topic went on into the late night. Four people eventually tendered their resignations and asked to be placed on the next Freedom Flight into France.

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

Voldemort chanted at the ward line to Hogwarts. He wasn't intent on breaking any of the ward lines he'd created – no, he was chanting to rewrite the runes on the rune stones buried under the ground. The permissive wards – allowing anyone in and few out – was now changed to permit entrance and egress to no one and no creature and no object.

Voldemort finished his chant and turned to continue walking the line. He needed to rewrite each of the tablets for the change to be most effective.

“Light magic is so powerful and so easily corrupted,” he pondered to himself. “The Wall of Light – their greatest defensive ward, used to kill all these cowards stinking up my school.”

He looked up and saw that his progress was being followed from the astronomy tower. That was what he wanted...a public sighting in the daylight by people who couldn't do anything about it, other than rant on the wizarding wireless. The fools were so easy to motivate, but fearful people were thoughtless people.

Voldemort finished the last three rune stones and then applied a Sonorus to himself.

“Dumbledore and the Cowards of Hogwarts, you'll be out of real food in a few weeks, even if you take to eating what disgusting things they grow in the greenhouses. No one can survive on conjured tea and biscuits. Dumbledore can keep the school for now. It'll be mine after you all starve to death.”

Voldemort gestured at a few of his Disillusioned Death Eaters. They levitated three Muggles out toward Voldemort.

“One last thing, a warning to anyone who might think to try to smuggle items into the school. My people will be watching. Let's pretend these three disgusting Muggles were people caught in an attempt.”

Toward the fat one with a mustache, Voldemort threw an entrail expelling curse. The fat man's bowels shot out of him and he screamed, silenced by a spell, until he died. Toward the horse-faced woman, he sent a bone shattering curse at her chest. The volume of blood and gore that poured from her chest gave her a few painful last seconds. The third, an obese, porcine young man, Voldemort performed a partial transfiguration upon: part human and part sea urchin. His death – entirely reversible in the earliest moments – took more than ten minutes and was the most awful. The sea urchin

portion couldn't survive in the air and it began drawing down the little oxygen provided by the other half. In a sense, the Muggle's malformed body killed itself, slowing suffocating to death.

All three of the bodies hung in the air, suspended by magic. Voldemort planned to leave them there for a good long time. He'd originally planned this step to demoralize Harry Potter, the tricky young man who hadn't been caught, but after 'interrogating' the disgusting vermin, he decided they had a different value.

"These demonstration 'volunteers' were Harry Potter's last living relatives. The fat man broke the boy's arm when Potter was seven. The woman forced Harry to cook for the family starting at age five and never said a kind word to him. The stupid, young one clobbered Harry with his ruffian friends more than a hundred times. This torment is what your grand leader, the fraud Dumbledore, planned for his little hero. All hail, the supporter of Muggles. He condemned your 'savior' to a life of hell, just as he's condemned all of you to your deaths. I will personally kill all Muggles who know of the existence of magic – and the Mudbloods who risk our safety. Enjoy your last few weeks on this Earth. They will hurt."

Voldemort turned away from the ward line pleased with the siege he'd just enacted. The events would be on the renegade channel of the wizarding wireless. The ripples from those broadcasts would spread throughout Britain and elsewhere. Voldemort and his people could begin locating – and destroying – the last of the holdouts. The fools would give away their own locations in their fearful attempts to communicate and plan.

"Bellatrix," Voldemort whispered. The distorted woman, perhaps his fiercest duelist, trotted toward him.

"You will lead the capture teams once this news leaks out. Speak with that vile Umbridge woman and learn the details. Be aware, my dear, that something has been harming a few of the capture teams recently. Several have stopped reporting in and I refuse to believe in wholesale cowardice. Find me Harry Potter...and return him alive. I personally wish to deal with him."

“Yes, my Lord.”

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

The backyard of a burned out Muggle home – where Colin and Dennis Creevey had grown up – was the site of the next operation. Right now, Harry was waiting for the others to finish. He couldn't use his wand and he had already set up the non-magical elements of the ambush: salt and car batteries.

Nymphadora Tonks was chatting with Harry in low tones while Sirius, Amelia Bones, and a few others finished off the setup.

“...they really didn't want to leave, especially Colin. I had to stun the young man so we could get him and his family onto the carpet....”

“Colin's a bit hyper, but he's motivated in the right way, I think,” Harry said.

“Dennis refused to let us leave behind Colin's books of photographs. Imagine my surprise at how many were of you....”

Harry's cheeks pinked up. He had come to like Colin Creevey as the boy had mellowed a touch as he'd gotten older. But he didn't think he'd ever be friends with someone so interested in Harry as a photographic subject.

“Harry, we're ready,” Sirius said.

Harry pushed off the fence he'd been leaning against and rechecked the thin cables attached to the car batteries.

“How much water did you put down there?” He wanted to make sure there was enough salt in it to make a decent conductor.

“It's about four feet deep,” Amelia said.

“Let me add another pound or two, then.” Harry walked over to a small backpack on the ground. He pulled out a heavy sack and brought it over to the gaping hole in the ground.

“Salt’s cheap. I’ll just throw it all in.” He did just that.

The first time they tried this trick, it didn’t work very well. Water and electricity should have equaled stunned or dead people. But they hadn’t counted on needing more than just conjured, pure water. Salt was perfect.

“Okay. Create the floor,” Sirius said. Tonks and Cavendish began floating the Muggle tents over to arrange them over the magical flooring (it resembled Muggle plywood) that covered the opening. Sirius threw some empty food tins and wrappers to give it a touch of authenticity.

“Light repelling and secrecy wards to give the ‘Aurors’ something to punch through.” She cast a half dozen spells before the whole thing looked right.

“I’ll trip the Taboo,” Amelia said. “Everyone else into hiding right now.”

Harry donned his Invisibility Cloak and climbed over the fence into the next yard. The other eight team members used Disillusion Spells or simply hopped on brooms and took off into the air. Thankfully it was a cloudy evening and they could hide reasonably well among the trees a few houses over.

Amelia had her wand out when she said, “Voldemort is a jackass,” and then immediately Disillusioned herself. She walked quickly, but not silently, through the ruins of the Creevey house.

Thirty seconds later a series of pops sounded through the mostly abandoned neighborhood.

It took a few moments for the light wards to fall, then the entire crew of seven ‘Aurors’ began heading for the tents. The first one to touch the fabric caused the fake flooring to disappear. All seven of them fell into the deep pit.

Harry threw off his cloak and quickly ran to the edge. He got a quick look at the motley crew in the water. One of them was a woman with a crazed face.

“Apparate now...” The woman yelled at her compatriots but nothing happened. “Portkeys...” She was desperate now.

She saw Harry and cast at him – only to discover the same anti-magic wards once used at Azkaban were emplaced in the pit – before Harry loosened the cables holding the car batteries in the air. The three heavy duty objects splashed into the salty water and everyone inside went rigid. Some were likely dead; others just stunned. In a few moments it wouldn’t matter.

The rest of the crew came to the mouth of the pit. Sirius, with more than a little surprise, identified the woman as his cousin, Bellatrix Lestranger.

“I would rather have never seen you again, Bella,” Sirius said, before casting a Severing Curse at the unresponsive woman’s neck.

Amelia Bones cast a couple of potentially lethal Cutting Curses. Harry watched everything with grim determination.

In less than three minutes, every body had been fatally wounded. No one would survive. It was now time for the team to hide the operation.

“I’m sorry,” Sirius said, to the people gathered in the yard and perhaps to his now-dead cousin in the pit. “I wish it didn’t have to be this way.”

Giles Cavendish reversed the banishment that had dispatched the dug up earth to a neighboring yard. The longer Giles held the spell the more dirt fell back into the pit. Within five minutes, the pit was gone and a rather mucky backyard was all that remained.

Magic was useful for killing enemies and hiding the evidence, wasn’t it? Harry didn’t even think anything was odd from his newly acquired black sense of humor.

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

Yaxley, Pettigrew, and Rookwood walked slowly into the Dark Lord's chamber. He was known to be in a foul mood today so all three moved with a good deal of caution.

Voldemort looked up and scowled. "You're all being reassigned. Some of my most valuable Death Eaters and supporters have disappeared in the past two months, including Bella. It's up to my best spies and thinkers to determine what's happening to them...I do not think Bella and the others disloyal...so look past simple betrayal as your solution. Bring me an answer and a solution to the problem."

Yaxley bowed and said, "Master, how many people have disappeared?"

"Eighty-one," Voldemort said. "I was only informed of this two hours ago. The messenger is dead."

Yaxley nodded. Eight-one people meant there was an organized resistance, a powerful one.

"Pettigrew, you will infiltrate this group or you will die."

The short, stout wizard just nodded. Voldemort could see the terror inside the wizard, although Wormtail was getting better at hiding his naked emotions.

Rookwood raised his head. "Master, may we access the Room of Scrying in the Department of Mysteries?"

Voldemort nodded. "Yes, of course. It will be a powerful aid, Augustus."

The three of them left before Voldemort summoned the next cadre.

The men fell to their knees in front of their lord. "You seven have a most important task. You will lead the quiet assault on Gringotts and on the goblin clans. We do not need such creatures guarding over our wealth – and our enemies do not need gold at all."

The group spent twenty minutes discussing ideas before Voldemort dismissed them to continue their work.

Lucius reentered the throne room. "Ambassador Flint is in Sweden but I have his dispatch. Germany and Bulgaria are ready to sign new pacts, France is still dithering, the Americans continue rattling their sabers but are unexpected to actually do anything..."

"Ambassador Flint has done well. He gave us needed time to consolidate our position. He will receive a fine reward."

The praise for Galactacus Flint rubbed Lucius the wrong way. He wanted to take credit, after all he had advised Fudge continually not to give in to the various requests and demands from foreign magical governments. Lucius had helped ensure Britain would be a magical pariah so that Voldemort could operate in peace when he returned.

Of course, Lucius couldn't explain any of this now. Now, it would seem jealousy and bitter harping, rather than thoughtful strategic diplomacy.

"I know your work with Fudge has paid off, too, my slippery friend," Voldemort said. "All those whispered suggestions to the man; all the ruination he allowed to occur. You did well to foresee our need...and, thus, Fudge accumulated no strong friends for magical Britain. Flint will not be the only one to receive a reward, Lucius."

Lucius nodded and left the room. He looked ashen in the corridor, however, as Voldemort had heard Lucius thoughts without direct eye contact. Malfoy had practiced Occlumency for three decades and still his Lord could pluck his thoughts out of the air. It was a dangerous thing. Very dangerous.

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

Amelia Bones, Sirius, and Harry were sitting in the second floor planning room with a very odd man in a gray cloak. He had contacted Elphias Doge, one of Dumbledore's old friends, who was in France now, and he'd eventually gotten referred to Amelia. The three of them

met with anyone who claimed to want to help. Unfortunately, they'd had very few of these meetings in the past three months.

The organized resistance to Voldemort and his reformed Ministry was less than twenty people.

"What can we call you?"

"My name is Vitterman. I only wore the cloak to show you some of my credentials. I no longer consider myself bound by confidentiality. The government has fallen, even if no one has officially proclaimed it."

"What are you willing to do to help reclaim it," Harry asked.

"I am a researcher, have been for a decade. I can lend you my wand (and the rest of me) in a pinch, but I'm better on problem solving....And you have a major one."

Amelia leaned forward. "What?"

"Voldemort really is immortal."

No other sentence among British wizards is such a conversation killer. It took a full five minutes of half intelligible questions before Vitterman was able to explain.

"Dumbledore, as Head of the Wizengamot, gets limited access to our department. Over the last decade, he's asked unusual questions of several Unspeakables, questions about rituals and immortality. Eventually we were able to pin down what sort of magical device Voldemort has used to prolong his lifespan and protect him from death. Have any of you heard of horcruxes?"

The three of them shook their heads.

"About as black magic as one can get. One shatters one's soul with a premeditated murder and then uses a ritual to transfer a soul fragment into an object of some sort. Potter there was the one who proved that Voldemort was using the blasted things...."

“The diary?”

Amelia and Sirius were both confused, so Harry explained parts of his second year at Hogwarts. Amelia began muttering, “A basilisk? In Hogwarts?”

“So Dumbledore knows about the horcruxes? What’s he done to find them – to destroy them?” Sirius asked.

“Nothing that I’m aware of. Privately he may have acted, but I doubt it.”

Amelia began to shout. “He’s suspected that Voldemort would return, but did nothing to prevent it? I’ll kill that man myself if we ever get him out of Hogwarts.”

“He’s a teacher and an amateur politician. He’s not a detective,” Harry said. “For now, on this matter alone, he has the benefit of the doubt. I wouldn’t have trusted the Ministry to search for them, not with the Malfoys buying off the last few Ministers of Magic.”

Sirius just sighed. “We can kill all the followers we want...we’ll never kill the main source of evil unless we unravel everything he’s done.”

The room fell silent. “I’ve killed part of him already; we can do it again and again and again if we need to.”

The Unspeakable nodded. “That’s very much what I wanted to hear. If you’d said anything else, I would have been on a muggle airplane to New Zealand tomorrow. We have to kill him all the way dead – or let the man have Britain. There are no other choices. Some people believe in mercy and waiting and hoping; I want to work with those who believe in forging their own destiny.”

The man lowered his hood...and looked remarkably young. “Pleased to meet you. I am called Vitterman Dumbledore, I’m the Headmaster’s grandnephew. I’ve been researching soul magics for six years and I think he’s a fool for what he’s done. Sign me up to help here.”

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

Fighting is better than ruling, Voldemort knew. He hated all these minor decisions and bureaucrats, all unworthy of his time. The Ministry had made itself dependent upon him for all its operations when Voldemort didn't care about most of what they did. Who cared about the Quidditch League – or whether portkeys were illegal to make by an unlicensed witch – or whether this or that experimental charm was approved. The business of the ruling class was warfare, leave the worthless issues to those who didn't have the power or the brains to fight.

Today Voldemort reopened the fight. No more getting bogged down with ridiculous details....

He hissed away at the Dementors in front of him. "I would have your assistance...."

"What do you want, wizard?"

"I would have your entire pod attack preselected targets. I would have you perform the Regenerative Kiss as often as you can with any Muggles you might find. I would have you sow utter terror amongst the Muggles of this Isle."

"What do you offer us, wizard?"

"Protection from those who might harm you...."

"None can harm us, wizard. Propose a settlement or perhaps we will sample your soul, what little remains of it."

"Wizards can harm you. They could herd you into a cavern and seal you into place. You would wither and droop from a lack of proximity to souls...."

The Dementor hung in the air for a moment before it spoke again. "Perhaps you speak the truth, wizard. We would demand a safe haven to raise the young who will be born from the Regenerative Kiss. You will give us such a place."

“You may have the Muggle town of Bristol, after you finish clearing it of Muggles.”

“That is a fair bargain, wizard. I know of Bristol from the souls I’ve claimed. We will gather together and begin the procession to our new home. Those who are nesting will remain; those who have yet to generate new life will aid you.”

“I would have our bargain last a thousand years....”

“Treachery is the only thing that will end it, wizard.”

Voldemort nodded and stepped away from the barren plain where he had finally caught up with the Dementors of Azkaban. In a few days or at most a week, the Muggles would be under attack from creatures they couldn’t see. It would take years for most of them to die, as a Dementor couldn’t feed more often than once every three or four days, but it was a strong opening to the war against Muggles. They’d chalk it up to a new disease they couldn’t understand – or to a terrorist plot they couldn’t unravel – or to anything but the real cause.

He apparated to the English coastline, very near to several critical Muggle facilities.

His Death Eaters were already waiting for him. “We’re ending the Muggle problem now. They’re powerful because of their numbers and their technology. We will begin to destroy both advantages. Destroy the ferries. Blow up the airports. Close the Channel Tunnel for good. Destroy their electrical generation stations...”

“What’s a Channel Tunnel?” one Death Eater asked, sotto voce.

Voldemort stopped his explanation and smiled. “That’s exactly the right question for a wizard to ask... In four days, the Chunnel will be nothing but history. There, in the distance, can you see it? The railroad tracks disappear into that tunnel? The Muggles have drilled a hole underneath the English Channel. We will ensure they can no longer move so freely. Take these maps. Each of you has several parts to play.”

The questions came hot and heavy. Thirty minutes later, the wizards under their masks had enough answers to understand their roles.

Voldemort tapped Lucius on the shoulder. "Come with me." The pair apparated back to the Dark Lord's underground lair.

"You will stand ground while I ratchet up the Siege of Hogwarts. The work you did in securing Snape's impeccable credentials – by staging an assassination attempt – was essential to this plan, Lucius. We needed Snape to be at Hogwarts, near to Dumbledore, to have this opportunity. You have served our people well."

"Thank you, my Lord."

Voldemort slipped into a deep trance and activated one of the least known features of the Dark Mark. Within moments, Severus Snape – behind the corrupted Wall of Light at Hogwarts – belonged completely to the dominating will of his former Lord. It was entirely appropriate and just that Snape be used as the tool to finally destroy Dumbledore's resistance at Hogwarts.

Voldemort commanded Snape to begin a few simple potions. One was stewed horned slugs mashed with salt into a paste and then diluted with water. A second was liters and liters of dragon's blood mixed with highly volatile animal products, like erumpent fluid. Voldemort had need of magical explosives.

When night fell, Snape, at Voldemort's command, snuck from the school with the salt and slug concoction. He used his wand to distribute the disgusting mess to every square meter of vegetable patches and open grass inside the Hogwarts wards. Within hours, everything, even the green grass, would wither and die. Nothing would grow in the doubly salted lands for years; the stewed horned slugs would prevent anything magical from taking root, the salt would keep away more mundane plants and vegetables.

Then he lugged a hundred kilograms of the volatile dragon's blood bomb to the Hogwarts greenhouses. He ladled out massive portions for each one. Moments after he finished, he drew out his wand and

cast Incendio at Greenhouse Number One. Seconds later, Severus was knocked off his feet by the procession of explosions.

Apart from whatever food the house elves had already squirreled away, Hogwarts was now without resources. Within days, starvation would set in.

The people who ran from the castle understood that immediately. When they saw a laughing Snape bleeding near the greenhouses, a half dozen curses quickly flew at him. Voldemort withdrew from the man's mind – via the Dark Mark – just as Snape took his last breath.

“Thus, always, to traitors, Severus.”

The best part was the brief view of Dumbledore's face when he saw who the traitor in their midst was. The old headmaster had trusted Snape for more than a decade...and now it was 'proven' false. Voldemort roared with laughter.

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

“We need to do something bigger. We're not getting his Inner Circle...” Sirius was just as concerned as everyone else about Snape's treachery and the grim situation at Hogwarts. They no longer had time to kill the 'Aurors' four or five at a time.

“A raid?” Remus asked.

Harry nodded. “Malfoys. We target their manor. They'll come running. But we need to keep Lucius for a while. To create an even bigger attack. I have an idea or four...”

Sirius groaned. Amelia and a few of the others in the room looked interested, but wary. Harry's plans were getting increasingly violent as he heard the tally of the dead. The Weasleys were inside Hogwarts; no one knew where Hermione was, or even if she was alive; Neville was presumed dead. Dean Thomas was in France, as Tonks had taken him across the Channel herself. Seamus was in Ireland with his family.

That short list of people Harry knew well was a bit sad. Being in Gryffindor had sort of limited his friends, hadn't it? He set the thought aside. He had to help them do something bigger; something big enough to end the war, to break open Hogwarts.

"Was there any more news on the rogue former Aurors who attempted to bring down the Wall of Light?" Harry asked.

"People inside Hogwarts observed it. All eight of them are presumed dead. A Ministry patrol discovered their efforts, you see...." Amelia usually had the best information. A very few people inside the Ministry remained their solely out of their interest to sabotage the Death Eaters. Unfortunately, they weren't able to do much, other than pass information after the fact.

"Tell the loyalists to scatter, Amelia. We're going to have to destroy everything to root out all the Death Eaters," Sirius said.

"I don't think we should be so cavalier about killing, Sirius."

"Madam Bones, if we just manage to deal with a little bit of the problem, it can take hold again. Once we figure out how to deal with Voldemort, and the Death Eaters – that's a difficult proposition under any circumstances – we can't just leave ideological supporters roaming free. It's got to be a complete victory...."

She shook her head. "I will help you kill Voldemort, but I refuse to kill my former colleagues for nothing more than staying at their jobs."

That began a common argument inside the planning room. Remus explained the crux of the dilemma. "If people have stayed with the Ministry after seeing the things it does and the sort of people with true power – and how can anyone not know that Scrimgeour is under the Imperius? – then they are lost to us. I would not see this war end, if it ever does, and have all the evil people seep back into their holes and escape punishment...and wait for the next opportune moment to strike."

Amelia turned on Lupin. "You're not the court system, Lupin."

“The courts slap purebloods on the wrist for rape or theft and execute werewolves for stealing vegetables – and that was before Voldemort returned to power. There is no justice in the Wizengamot, Amelia, not with three quarters of the bastards siding with Voldemort now and forever....”

Harry got up and left the room. Amelia and a few others would never agree, period. In fact, they were getting more strident as the Freedom Fighters had more and bigger successes with their operations. Harry was with Sirius, Remus, Tonks, and the majority on this question. Every supporter had to go, permanently, as soon as it was possible.

Harry went back to cleaning. He didn't like it, but he was tired of living in a horrible, dark, dirty house. The kitchen, his bedroom, and a few other spots were clean enough, but most of the house was still a mess.

After a few hours, Harry fell to examining a cabinet. It had some nasty little surprises. He could feel the dark magic infesting the case. Harry knew how to run the detection spells, but didn't trust the Trace to let him escape Ministry detection.

Harry wandered out into the hall and saw Vitterman Dumbledore. “Do you have a moment? There are some interesting objects in here....”

The man nodded, set down the three books he'd just borrowed from the Black Library, and followed Harry.

“There.”

Vitterman pulled out his wand and began casting. A minute later his hand snaked into the cabinet and pulled out a garish locket.

“It's been sitting here all this time, Harry...” The man had an insane smile on his face.

“What do you mean?”

He nodded at the locket. “This is the solution to all our problems....”

The horrible realization hit Harry then. He'd been inches away from another of Voldemort's foul creations. "If he made this one and the diary, what's to say he didn't make two dozen more?"

"You're talking like an adventurer, my clever young friend, instead of a researcher of arcane magics. Have I ever told you about the Metonymy Principle?"

"No," Harry said.

"You know about Polyjuice Potion?"

Harry smirked. "Just a bit."

"Right," Vitterman said, "Polyjuice works because of the Metonymy Principle. You use a small part of the whole to suggest the whole. A bit of hair or blood and, voila, you've got a doppelganger. Voodoo uses it as do a hundred different deadly rituals...."

"I'm not following."

"Harry, now that we've found one of these thrice-cursed objects, we're done with that problem. We use a Light ritual based on the Metonymy Principle to destroy all the fragments of his soul...."

"Would the ritual kill him?"

That brought the former Unspeakable up cold. "I don't know. It's possible, I guess, but unlikely. The ritual will only effect the soul fragment, I think, unless you have some hair or blood of Voldemort's lying around?"

Harry shook his head, then moved on to his next thought. "When can we do this ritual?"

"Tonight. The Synechdicon is something I've used a dozen times for destroying classes of cursed objects. We've even used it to kill rogue werewolves. We pluck out hairs or broken teeth from the victim's bodies, then use the ritual to destroy the attackers. It's got a pretty decent reach to it. Some werewolves live their day lives in Ireland and

come over here to play on full moons. With this ritual, we'll be able to destroy any of these things in Britain, Ireland, or even out in France...."

Harry was fascinated and horrified. He'd hate for such a ritual ever to be known to his enemies. He'd have to be a whole lot more careful with the hair and other elements of his own body falling into the wrong hands.

"Let's do it."

"Find me a clean room and I'll get started drawing the runes...."

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

Voldemort woke in the night screaming...something horrifying had happened, but he didn't know what it was.

He didn't ever dream, not since he had created his first soul fragment and horcrux, but tonight he had. He'd felt and remembered and even smelled each and every murder, save the first, he used to create his Horcruxes. Something was wrong.

He threw a robe over his naked body and ran from the room. He snagged the first Death Eater he saw and pressed his wand to the Dark Mark. The masked man collapsed in agony on the floor.

Lucius was the first through the door. "Go and find me that hag Umbridge, Lucius." Malfoy stuttered out his understanding and left to find the woman.

The Death Eaters who entered were clearly terrified after looking at their Master. He looked like he could incinerate people with a glance.

It was a silent, terrifying five minutes before Lucius appeared with Dolores Umbridge. Voldemort didn't wait until she was through the door. "Madam, you are tasked with finding Harry Potter. Where is he?"

The terrified woman stuttered. "I d-don't know..."

The green light hit her and she fell over dead.

He pointed his wand at a masked Death Eater. "Pius Thicknesse, you are the new Director. Do not fail me. Retask all the Aurors to finding Harry Potter. Do it now." The man bowed and was relieved to be out of the room.

Voldemort swiveled to stare at another man. "Yaxley, Nagini was out hunting tonight. Find her for me."

Yaxley didn't say anything before leaving.

"Our opposition is stronger than we expected. We must plan...."

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

The entire team spent the night preparing the ambush at the Malfoy estate.

"This is the riskiest one we've done to date." Amelia was back into hand wringing.

"We need to end this now. Hogwarts is in desperate straits." Sirius didn't want to have this debate on the edge of the Malfoy wards. It was about time to provoke a bit of a battle. "We've already decided this. Are you in or not?"

Amelia sighed and nodded. The team scattered to the safe regions. Sirius shot his godson another glance. "Harry, don't spring it until after we've got Malfoy...."

Harry was upset at being reduced to a supporting role. "It doesn't have to be him. Anyone with the Dark Mark will do. Just summon whoever falls over, okay?" Harry and Vitterman had planned most of this ambush out three nights ago. He'd barely been able to talk his way into attending; Vitterman remained behind to get the next steps ready.

Harry had the two safest steps; everyone else had to draw the people out and into the blast radius. Harry loaded up a crossbow – he'd borrowed the idea from Hagrid – and affixed the spell interrupter, a low powered one, to the crossbow bolt. He aimed and released.

The bolt hit the wards and then they turned vibrant colors as they attacked what they assumed to be an invading force. The night sky light up with beautiful colors.

Harry reloaded the crossbow and loaded up a bolt with a a different stored spell in it.

Harry couldn't see where anyone else was. He felt the tension in the air. The wards continue to crackle a few hundred feet away. Waiting was terror; when things were happening there was no time to think, but the dead time just before the attack, all the mind had to do was race, hope, and plot. Harry tried to control his breathing, but his body was rather traitorous this evening.

The first three pops shattered the calm. Malfoy and two others apparated into view. The plan was to wait. The 'Aurors' had begun using multi-waved attacks to potentially throw the renegades off their plans. The tension held.

Malfoy walked and investigated his wards. He saw the remains of the crossbow bolt on the ground. He bent down to investigate when the second wave – five more people – apparated in. This was now the tricky spot. No one could agree whether the false Aurors had settled on two or three waves. If they delayed for too long to launch their attack –

A Stunner leaped from the foliage. Someone had started the battle without the signal. An idiot.

Three of the Death Eaters returned the Killing Curse in that direction.

The night air light up in flying curses. The Death Eaters scrambled to turn small stones into barriers capable of protecting them from a firefight. Malfoy was trying to tug his compatriots inside the Malfoy

wards when a crossbow bolt penetrated his calf muscle. A second later Malfoy keeled over and hit the ground.

A voice called out, “Accio Malfoy!” The blonde Death Eater zoomed through the night. Harry counted to five and pressed the button.

The buried explosive had a dozen pounds of Muggle-made nails laid on top of it and a solid piece of iron underneath to help drive the force of the explosion upward.

Within a second, every Death Eater not named Malfoy was dead or dying.

Arrogant pureblood types probably scanned for dangerous magics, but none of them had thought to check for non-magical dangers. The bomb had killed seven Death Eaters and brought down the strong, but still residential style of wards Malfoy Manor possessed.

“Finish it,” Sirius yelled as three people ran and threw massive canisters at the home. They were all fairly sure that Narcissa and Draco were staying elsewhere. House elves were smart enough to abandon a burning home, as well.

Amelia stalked into the underbrush. “Diggle threw the stunner. At least one of the Killing Curses hit him.”

“He knew the plan,” Tonks said. “He got scared and then he got dead.”

Of all the people working with the Freedom Fighters – as they jokingly called themselves – Tonks had probably changed the most. From a clumsy, wide-eyed Auror, she had become vicious, incisive, and calculating. She didn’t hide behind technicalities and justifications; she knew they were engaged in a war and were perpetrating war crimes against the other side. Both sides fought for what they believed in; both sides were guilty of atrocities.

Amelia still held to some distorted moral code: she could kill this type but not that type. It made Harry’s head ache.

“Avery, Amycus Carrow, and Mulciber are dead. I don’t know who the others are,” Remus said.

Sirius levitated Lucius Malfoy out from the place where they’d both hidden from the explosion.

“Are you sure we should do this next part,” Amelia asked.

Sirius responded, “If you have problems with this, Amelia, you’re really going to hate the plan for dealing with the Ministry....”

At that Remus, Tonks, and two others – the best of the group with their Patronus Charms – apparated away to near Bristol. The rumors said that the Dementors had taken over the city there.

“I do hate this,” Amelia said.

“You hate it, but not enough to leave Voldemort in power, Madam Bones,” Harry said. He pulled out his portkey and left the scene of devastation. There was work to be done and arguments weren’t going to help.

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

“How did it all go wrong so quickly? Dumbledore is penned up and starving inside his school. They’re probably eating house elves to survive. The lot out here is just a bunch of ragtags...” Voldemort raged in his throne room. “...Yet they win. They fight and they win. We don’t even know if it’s five or fifty. We know nothing.”

He had begun talking to himself more and more since the probable destruction of his horcruxes. His mind wandered now. He couldn’t concentrate. He’d killed three Death Eaters in a fight of rage last night that passed almost instantly. He was slipping.

Yaxley walked into the room. “We’ve done the Trace on all the underage magic hunts. All of the calls where headhunters failed to return matched the Potter wand signature....”

“He’s been ambushing us? Him and whoever’s working with him?”

The Death Eater nodded.

“I want a plan. I want Potter. We’ll up the ante, destroy Hogwarts and all those within unless he gives himself to me....”

Voldemort had no time. He knew he was likely mortal now. ‘The power the Dark Lord knows not...’ Well, Voldemort still didn’t know what it was, but it seemed Potter had used it. His horcruxes were destroyed; his immortality rescinded. He needed to find and kill Potter, to end the prophecy in his favor.

He needed to get back the momentum. He needed to win.

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

“It doesn’t look like much,” Amelia said. She was inspecting the final stroke to the plan to break Voldemort’s power.

“It’s enough,” Harry said.

Sirius had a grim expression on his face as he nodded. “Vitterman tested it a few days ago. It’s plenty.”

Amelia fingered the small box. Then her head turned toward the man unconscious and bound in the next room. “Why’s he still here?”

“We’re waiting for an all-call. I want this to take out as many people as it possibly can,” Vitterman said.

“I want it known....”

“Amelia,” Harry said, using her first name for the first time, “shut up. You want to play by Auror rules, go turn yourself in to them and see what their version of a Wizengamot does to you. We’re playing by reality’s rules. Hit fast and break as much as you can.”

Amelia’s face tore up in rage. “I am not some stupid bureaucrat, child. I worked cases for thirty-four years before I made the mistake of

going into management. I don't like this. I don't like any of it. We're murdering people every day, people we don't have the first clue about...."

"They support Voldemort," Sirius said. "That's all we need to know."

"I should have fled to France or Hogwarts...."

"I agree," Sirius and Harry both said.

The room almost frosted over at that. "I'm done," she said.

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

Voldemort found the new wards at Hogwarts. The crackpot Dumbledore had tied in a layer of new wards to the ward stones Voldemort had buried for the corrupted Wall of Light. In order to attack the school and begin killing the people inside it, Voldemort would have to first unravel his own ward – allowing those trapped inside to flee.

The crazed man had a few good ideas left in his rotting mind, didn't he?

"The compromise isn't worth it. Let them starve. We'll get to Potter another way." He had a small team with him and didn't have enough people remaining to circle the entire ground of Hogwarts to prevent anyone escaping should he drop the Wall of Light.

He admitted to himself that he used Snape well – but he could have done better. He should have had Snape lure Dumbledore out to the explosion site. Dumbledore was still too powerful a foe. Voldemort should have killed him, particularly as the man had the full magical resources of the school at his disposal.

"Return to the manor. We need to plan."

The decisive Voldemort was gone. Now all he could do was question his own decisions. He had never foreseen so many things going wrong so quickly.

Voldemort summoned all his Death Eaters, but he was positively shocked when a pallid, almost cadaverous Lucius Malfoy was the last one through the door.

“Master, I escaped....”

“Lucius?”

“Master, they tortured me trying to find out where you were. I withstood it all....”

“Was Potter there?”

Lucius nodded.

“What is in the box you carry, my slippery friend? Have you brought me Potter’s head?”

The blonde man shook his head. “They said it was critical research, essential for destroying you.”

“What is it?”

Lucius opened the lid of the box as he stood in the middle of the room. It was unfortunate that no one cast an Imperius-detection spell on Lucius before he did so.

The box exploded outward at a tremendous speed. Thousands of sharp metal pellets flew in every direction. The very mortal Tom Riddle slumped to the ground in five separate pieces.

Everyone in the room – including nearly all of Voldemort’s remaining Death Eaters – died in that instant.

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

At the same time Voldemort ceased to exist, the second portion of the plan went into effect. Remus, Tonks, and their group had spent three days trapping and forcing a dozen Dementors to move to London.

They were penned up in an abandoned home a block from the Ministry of Magic main entrance.

They were waiting for the signal.

Sirius Black, on the other hand, had made his way to the virtual palace that Wigberta Edgecombe had claimed for herself and her three children after killing the previous occupants. Each one fell to a stunner before Sirius and his backup team isolated Edgecombe.

Sirius battered through the door, waited for Edgecombe's hail of spells, and then felled her with a carefully aimed stunner. His team quickly walked inside and disarmed the woman.

In a carefully coordinated move, one team member released her from the stunner while Sirius cast the Imperius Curse upon her. It was the first time he'd ever done so. He hoped it was the last.

"You will head to your old office controlling the Floo. You will disable the Floo for the entire Ministry building. Then you will walk to your new office and engage the building-wide security lockdown. You will wait calmly in your office until released."

The woman nodded and began to walk out of the room. Sirius nodded at two of his team members to follow along. He was a new practitioner of the Imperius and didn't want anything to go wrong.

In five minutes, Sirius received the message from the people following Edgecombe. The Ministry Floo network was destroyed. Sirius sent the message to Tonks and Remus: they could begin moving the Dementors.

Sirius and his group returned to Number 12, Grimmauld Place. He poured himself a stiff shot of a Muggle scotch. It wasn't everyday that one condemned a few hundred other witches and wizards to death for collaborating with Voldemort.

Harry came down the stairs with a solemn look on his face.

Sirius just nodded. No words were necessary. Thousands of magical persons and creatures had died in this renewed warfare, if the reports over the Wizing Wireless plus the Daily Prophet were to be believed. Sirius, Harry, and their actions had just added a few hundred more to the total.

The lockdown Edgecombe was commanded to initiate nullified all magic inside the Ministry: no wand-based spells, no portkeys, no apparition. It was designed as a last resort for an attack by a hostile wizing force. The Aurors would drop their wands under these conditions and rely upon ancient-looking muggle firearms.

Of course, nothing really wounded Dementors.

It was a guaranteed massacre.

Remus and Tonks both hit the bottle when they returned. They'd been in close quarters with the Dementors for almost four days. Both of their hands still shook even after they sat down.

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

The mopping up was mostly outside Harry or Sirius' abilities. Gringotts goblins got wind of a traitorous clan that had agreed to help Voldemort in conquering the goblin-run bank. The goblin-on-goblin war was quick, swift, and decisive. Every member of the traitorous clan died.

For Voldemort's part in the temptation, the Gringotts goblins confiscated the assets of every Marked Death Eater, once a list was circulated by Sirius and his group. The Freedom Fighters did publish a full accounting of every action they undertook, including Amelia Bones' objections to many of their activities. It became a worldwide wonder. Still, not everyone believed it.

Inside Britain, it made the group an object of awe and hatred. Families of the Dark supporters made three assassination attempts in the day following Voldemort's death, all of them failed. Still, it made Tonks, Tatiana Bilge, and Vitterman Dumbledore more than a bit circumspect.

Amelia Bones, as one of the few remaining department heads from the pre-Voldemort Ministry, made a report to the Muggle government. To say they were displeased was an understatement.

Amelia's first task, after the ringing in her ears stopped, was organizing people to round up and corral the Dementors. The town of Bristol had already lost seven hundred residents to a mysterious illness no one could explain. It took weeks to finish this task – and a cavern in Wales that the team first guarded and later sealed off completely as the last known Dementor was ushered inside.

Another team, lead by Tonks and Roztruk, the Gringotts goblin who headed up their cursebreaking division, dismantled the wards at Hogwarts.

Three dozen people died by the time the wards fell, mostly from illnesses that couldn't be cured. The loss of the Potions ingredients from the destroyed greenhouses had been more immediately deadly than the ruination of the food supply. (Sad to say, Voldemort had been right. All the house elves in Hogwarts were dead, many consumed by hungry witches and wizards. The Quibbler, when it reconstituted itself under deputy editor Lilah Portree, made quite a big deal of this fact.)

St. Mungo's called in healers from seven other countries to help with the overload. Hogwarts became the site of a massive auxiliary hospital.

A few mysterious things also happened in the week after the fall of Voldemort. Sirius and Harry would never admit to their involvement, but somehow Borgin & Burkes in Knockturn Alley burned down. Likewise, a few Voldemort supporters were found floating in the Turlecot River outside Hogsmeade. They'd been dead less than a day.

Harry did find time, after compiling the notes on what he, Sirius, and the others had done, to visit with the friends who'd been at Hogwarts. The Weasleys who'd fled there were all alive, if a touch

undernourished. Ron complained for the first half hour and didn't even ask Harry what he'd done – or how the war ended. Typical.

He also investigated the ruins of Longbottom Manor and found Neville's body in one of the greenhouses on the property. Killing Curse, it seemed.

After the first week, it became extremely uncomfortable for Harry to go out in any public way. The most vocal of the people he met called him a murderer. Others almost crushed him as they gave thanks for his group's efforts.

Then the Ministry began to reform under Amelia Bones.

Sirius and Harry sat in an empty 12 Grimmauld Place debating their options. Remus and Tonks were due back in an hour.

"I think we'll need to leave...." That was Harry's viewpoint.

"Why?"

"You're still officially a wanted fugitive...."

"Amelia knows better. We have Pettigrew's body in stasis...."

Harry shook his head. "She's acting like a politician. We reported on the things she's done and she's disowned almost everything, even things she personally participated in. She's preparing something – something we're not going to like."

"She's going to arrest us, you think?"

"I think she'll be forced to...we broke every kind of law to rid ourselves of Voldemort. They will come in and sit in judgment of what we did, while they were cowering in France or at Hogwarts. They say we should have stunned and incapacitated, not killed. They will say we shouldn't have ambushed the legal law enforcement. These people care more about legalities than anything...they don't want this set as a precedent..."

“You’ve become very skeptical, Harry.”

Harry nodded. “I’ve had my eyes opened and burned with acid....”

“I’ll follow along, as long as it’s interesting wherever we wind up.”

Harry laughed. “The Americans just suspended a numbers of treaties with the British over the Dark Lord issue – and Britain never sending out the coded notification of a fallen government. That would have been Amelia’s job, of course....”

“Very good. They’ll play out their grudge with her while we get a quiet life.”

“Let’s see what Remus and Tonks and maybe some of the others think.”

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

“Thank you for visiting, Harry. You and Sirius were most successful....” Harry didn’t like being back at Hogwarts under these circumstances, but he did have something to do here.

“Not everyone thinks so. My source tells me that the reformed Wizengamot is a day away from ordering my arrest.”

Dumbledore didn’t look surprised. “I’m sorry to hear that....”

“Save it. I came here to ask a single question. Did you want us to lose to Voldemort?”

The old grandfatherly act ended at that question. “What?”

“Did you want us to fail?”

The vicious fighter underneath all Dumbledore’s layers of civilities poked his head out and snarled, “No, what kind of stupid idea is that?”

"It doesn't seem stupid based on my reading of the evidence. You knew about a prophecy concerning me and Voldemort: I presume that's why he kidnapped Trelawney? You knew about his horcruxes and I even proved their existence, but you didn't round them up and destroy them?"

Dumbledore was once again calm and collected. "My boy...."

Harry shook his head. "Your half-truths won't work."

"I did my best to find them...."

Harry shook his head. "I had one in my head all this time. You knew, didn't you? When we did the ritual to destroy them all after finding one, it knocked me unconscious for a solid day. Tell me, did you know?"

The man paled but didn't answer.

"You expected me to die, or did you have some elaborate scheme I'd only learn about at the last second?"

Another non-answer.

"You're always too late...with your actions and your explanations, old man. You had a decade to prepare yourself – and me – and you did nothing. You got confirmation about the horcruxes two years ago...and still you did nothing. I'd have to say you were a closeted Voldemort supporter based solely on your actions and not on your rhetoric."

"You did the job...."

"Two dozen of us hid from the Death Eaters and the Ministry, tried to send all the Muggleborn out of the country so they wouldn't be slaughtered, and then used traps and anything we could think of to kill people...it's possible a lot of them didn't deserve to die, but we had no choice about being selective. That's on you, cloistered in this damned school with the other strongest fighters on the Light side."

Dumbledore tried to stare in Harry's eyes. "A guerilla war is hard to fight. May I ask you what methods you used?"

"You may not. Stay out of my head...."

"An old man's curiosity."

Harry shook his head. "I know Amelia Bones has been here three times since the Wall of Light was breached. You're the one advising her to prosecute, aren't you? I can see your supporters among the Wizengamot trying to pretend to be virginal and pure as the rest of the world starts peering into what happened."

Dumbledore shrugged. "I have no idea what you're talking about, Harry. Your legal liabilities are your own. I told you after we were sealed in here to stick to the Light and Just..."

"If we prosecuted this war the way you did the first time around, we'd all be dead."

Dumbledore blinked his eyes and said in a flat, low tone. "Better dead than irretrievably dark, I say."

Harry smiled a hateful little smile. "I understand. You would rather lose than win the wrong way. I don't agree of course. At one time, you didn't either. You salvaged Snape for some reason...and I would suspect you'd sacrifice any light wizard so that you could redeem some worthless piece of crap. Malfoy, perhaps?" Harry surveyed the room and saw that it was indeed empty. "I will never see you again, Headmaster, and I will never return to this school, even though it was the first place I ever felt wanted. If you ever come looking for me, one of us will die. Your inactions before and during the first war – and your insistence on pacifistic, ineffectual methods – killed my parents as much as Voldemort did...."

"You know that's not true, Harry."

"You dither on everything, on horcruxes, on preparing me for dealing with the prophecy. The worst crime was that you suspected your former pupil Tom Riddle since he was sixteen or younger and did

nothing while it was still possible to easily stop him. You knew he killed a student and Hogwarts and let him slip away. Your grandnephew told me all about your conversations with him...and you put Tom Riddle out of mind shortly after you conquered your first dark lord. One wasn't enough? You wanted to grow a second one? Who knows if you had a reason or if you got lazy. You knew what he was – you had to suspect what he might do with that sort of amoral hatred....”

Dumbledore's harshness echoed in his voice, then. “The same emotion you seem to have in spades, Harry.”

“Is that it? You want me arrested because you think I'll be a dark lord?” Harry laughed. “I'll tell the Healers to check you for senility. I will never become what Tom was. I love laughing with my godfather; I love life, not that wraith-like purgatory Tom was in. But the more I talk and justify myself, the more I see you don't understand. Everything has to fit your mold or else it's evil. Fine, stay here in your castle and churn out dark wizards by the bucketload through your carelessness and ignorance. You aren't evil, Headmaster, but you foster it and grow it with everything you try to fix. You have the reverse Midas curse.”

Harry turned and walked out of the castle. Three different Aurors looked at Harry carefully. Harry also felt one casting a tracking charm on him before he left the grounds. Harry touched an illegal portkey and left Britain. Sirius removed the tracking charm moments later and then the pair of them were out of Europe altogether.

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

Harry and Sirius enjoyed their first few months in America. They were relatively free to do as they wished. The Gringotts branch in New York facilitated the movement of their assets. Harry and Sirius declared themselves to the American Department of Magic, explained and proved Sirius' innocence of old criminal charges in Britain, and claimed sanctuary.

Harry picked up books to continue learning magic. (The Black Family library had made its way into a series of magical trunks.) They both,

along with Remus, Tonks, and a few other involuntary refugees, began searching for a new place to call home.

The journey took them to Montana. They bought one hundred sixty acres in the mountains. They set and raised wards heavy enough to hide underage magic. They used a small valley to hide a Quidditch pitch. They created houses and greenhouses in which to live and grow food. They felt like people without a home; people likely to be under siege at any time.

As they feared, the Wizengamot issued arrest warrants for most of the Freedom Fighters. Amelia and three others – who were all promptly awarded seats on the Wizengamot – escaped indictment.

Harry, Sirius, and the others decided to fight back. Dumbledore and Amelia prized their pristine reputations above all else – even if it meant slander and lies in the public domain.

The little report on the specific actions of the Freedom Fighters during the five months of the war wasn't enough – people believed it, but not enough to protest what the British Ministry of Magic was doing.

"We're going to topple them. I want Dumbledore imprisoned," Harry said. The more he heard from Vitterman and others who knew, and didn't care for, the Headmaster, the angrier Harry got.

"I'm going to hit them with two true stories. The Life of Harry Potter, complete with pensieve moments, and The Life of Sirius Black. Let's see the Headmaster squirrel out of that..."

They found a magical publisher in Boston willing to perform the complex spellwork to make both books possible. Six months after their arrival in America, The Life of Harry Potter – written by a notoriously publicity-shy individual – hit the bookstores.

Chapters one through three covered the lives of his parents and their murder. Chapter four covered Harry's placement with the Dursleys and his years up until he started elementary school. Chapter five through seven detailed every kind of verbal abuse. Chapter eight heralded his introduction to the magical world. Every thing

Dumbledore did to Harry made it into the book, every half truth, every lie, every omission. Dumbledore almost letting Voldemort capture the Philosopher's Stone, almost letting Ginny Weasley die, refusing to force the issue of Sirius Black's innocence, allowing a Death Eater to masquerade as a close friend....Then Amelia's reputation took a beating during the war: her wanting the benefits of the Freedom Fighters, but unwillingness to take responsibility for the war they fought. The plotting and scheming that occurred after Hogwarts was reopened – as reported by more than one angry person who overheard one thing or another.

The book sold a thousand copies in America in its first day. It sold well in France and most other countries in Europe. Harry refused to let it be sold in Britain – at the present time – he was waiting for the international world to turn on Amelia and Dumbledore first.

After the book came out, the entire clan refused to leave the wards. They all knew reprisals were coming. America wouldn't honor any request for extradition, but Harry knew that the 'squeaky clean' Dumbledore wasn't above stealing a baby and placing it with abusive guardians.

It was five days after Harry's sixteenth birthday when Harry, Sirius, and everyone else felt the wards come under assault.

Dumbledore was here – with others. Here it was. The confrontation.

Harry read that Dumbledore had been tossed out of the ICW a few days earlier for his lies and criminal activities. The ICW had also issued a blanket immunity for the activities of the Freedom Fighters. Harry knew it wasn't enough to stop whatever insane things Dumbledore had planned.

He mumbled to himself before he tripped the active defenses. "It's not paranoia if someone is really after you...." Harry tapped the first rune stone on the wall of the room he was in.

A massive voice boomed throughout the compound. "This compound utilizes legally registered death wards as part of its protections. If you have not been invited here, you will not be able to safely enter the

compound. Please write a letter to the person you wish to speak with and schedule an appointment.”

The same message sounded four more times over the next twenty minutes.

Sirius, Tonks, Remus, Vitterman, and five others came to the room where Harry was. This room always had at least one person in it, no matter the time of day. It was the centerpiece of the defenses.

Sirius tapped the second rune stone. “You are now under the effects of a Confundus ward. This is your second and final warning. You have five minutes to exit the wards of this compound.” He removed his wand from the stone. The message continued repeating. The ward was a powerful one. Likely everyone save Dumbledore was doubled over puking after the Confundus let up. Who knew if they would listen to the warning.

The people inside the secure room all shared glances with each other. It was clear that people were still assaulting the wards.

With a tear in his eye, Harry tapped his wand on the third rune. “The Death Wards activate in thirty seconds. Back away from the wards at least one hundred yards. The Death Wards will overpower any magical protection you think you have. Wards charging. Fifteen seconds. Ten seconds. Five. Four. Three. Two. One.”

The discharge was enormous. Three dedicated magical sinks emptied themselves in that instant.

“We did the right things...and will be forever hounded for it. It was worth the freedom, though. I’m sure a lot of people appreciate it back in Britain.” ‘Just not us,’ was the sentiment left unsaid. That was Remus, looking for the positive in any situation.

Sirius got up. “I’ll call in the Aurors to observe everything.”

“We’re supposed to be somewhat safe here. The Aurors should understand; we followed the law. The earliest American guerilla fighters are still revered here as the Founding Fathers,” Harry said.

Sirius had turned on the Muggle camera system that sat outside the ward line. Dumbledore. Alastor Moody. Emmaline Vance. Harry had memorized the faces of all known Dumbledore and Bones sympathizers. He didn't recognize the other bodies, although there were seven others.

"We'll see. We may have to move again. Who knows?" That was Sirius' darker mood peeking out.

"We'll just add this as a chapter to the book we're writing on you, Sirius. The innocent protecting themselves from the high and mighty rule breakers...."

"It might win in the court of public opinion, but who knows if they'll consider it legal, given who just died."

It took Sirius, Harry, and the others a day to hear that Dumbledore had each of his team members using magical ear plugs. None of them had even heard the ward warnings, even if they all felt the powerful warning ward kick into effect. Dumbledore had effectively sent his people on a suicide mission...and they all followed along. What a sad way to die.

X-x-X-x-X-x-X-x

A/N: Doing the right thing often costs more than it was probably worth. Sorry for the downer of an ending, it's just the way the story went.